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REVIEW AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONCLUDING DOCUMENT OF THE TWELFTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY: REGIONAL CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES: ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SECURITY QUESTIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-fourth year

Letter dated 2 August 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Cameroon to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the report of the Subregional High-Level Seminar on the implementation of the recommendations contained in your report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, held in Yaoundé (Cameroon) from 19 to 21 July 1999, as part of the programme of activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 77 (a) of the provisional agenda, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Martin BELINGA EBOUTOU
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

UNITED NATIONS STANDING ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON SECURITY QUESTIONS IN CENTRAL AFRICA

REPORT OF THE SUBREGIONAL HIGH-LEVEL SEMINAR ON THE EXAMINATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS CONTAINED IN THE REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS ON THE CAUSES OF CONFLICT AND THE PROMOTION OF DURABLE PEACE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA

I. Introduction

As part of the programme of activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, the Subregional High-Level Seminar on the Examination and Implementation of the Recommendations Contained in the Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa was held in Yaoundé from 19 to 21 July 1999.

It was decided to hold the Seminar at the tenth ministerial meeting of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, held in Yaoundé from 26 to 30 October 1998. The participants at that meeting stressed the importance of the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General and gave the bureau of the Committee a mandate "to take appropriate steps to organize a high-level seminar aimed at facilitating implementation of the recommendations of relevance to Central Africa".

The following nine countries members of the Committee took part in the Seminar: Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe. Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were invited but did not attend.

So that the Seminar could fully achieve its objectives of promoting sustainable peace and development in Central Africa by suitably adapting the manner of implementation of the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report, each of the countries was represented by social categories whose influence on maintaining a climate of peace and security would be a determining factor: high-level civilian and military officials, parliamentarians and representatives of civil society.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations was represented at the Seminar by Mr. Halidou Ouedraogo.

The secretariat of the Seminar comprised Ms. Pamela Maponga, Ms. Lorian Austin, Ms. Nicole Moran, Mr. Ivor Richard Fung, Mr. Musifiky Mwanasali and Mr. Ferdinand Ngoh Ngoh.

The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon and Chairman at the Ministerial level

of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

The following public figures also graced the ceremony with their presence: Mr. Joseph Dion Ngute, Minister of State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, responsible for the Commonwealth; Mr. Adoum Gargoum, Minister of State to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, responsible for the Islamic world; Mr. Emmanuel Edou, Secretary of State for Defence of Cameroon; and Mr. Antar Gassagaye, Secretary of State to the Ministry of Local Government of Cameroon.

Two important and inspirational speeches were given on this occasion, by Mr. Halidou Ouedraogo, senior officer from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa representing the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Mr. Augustain Kontchou Kouomegni, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon.

The participants decided to entrust guidance of the work of the Seminar to the bureau of the Committee.

The work of the Seminar was therefore chaired by Ambassador Martin Belinga Eboutou of Cameroon.

Ambassador Jacques Hakizimana of Burundi acted as Rapporteur.

Mr. Ivor Richard Fung, Director of the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, made an introductory statement at the opening of the Seminar.

Mr. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, also chaired the closing ceremony.

The Seminar covered the following subjects:

Theme 1: Typology of the conflicts and crises in Central Africa

Speaker: Mr. William Aurélien Eteki Mboumoua, Head of the United Nations Secretary-General's Advisory Mission on the Proliferation of Light Weapons in the Sahara-Sahel subregion

Theme 2: Mechanisms and methods for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and crises

Speaker: Mr. William Aurélien Eteki Mboumoua

Theme 3: Specific measures to prevent conflicts and insecurity in Central Africa

Speakers: Mr. Jean-Emmanuel Pondi and Mr. Laurent Zang

Theme 4: Peacemaking and peacekeeping measures

Speaker: Mr. Musifiky Mwanasali

Theme 5: Peace-building measures

Speaker: General Cheick Oumar Diarra

Theme 6: Promotion of international humanitarian law

Speakers: Mr. Gilbert Rufin Loubaki and Mr. Daniel Augstburger

Theme 7: Promotion of good governance and sustainable development

Subtheme 1: Promotion of good governance

Speakers: Mr. Jean-Jacques Ndoudoumou and Mr. David Abouem A. Tchoyi

Subtheme 2: Promotion of sustainable development

Speakers: Mr. Martin Zeh-Nlo and Mr. David Tchuinou

II. The work of the Seminar

Following the methodology proposed by the organizers, the Yaoundé Seminar gave rise to information-packed presentations on each theme given by high-level experts of recognized competence and experience, followed by dynamic and constructive exchanges with the participants and closing with relevant recommendations on specific measures to be taken in order to promote peace, security, stability and development in Central Africa.

1. Under the theme "Typology of the conflicts and crises in Central Africa", the Seminar reviewed the various causes of the conflicts which keep tearing the subregion apart. The factors driving these conflicts which the Seminar identified showed why internal conflicts clearly predominate: ethnic rivalries, general decline in the rule of law, democratic shortcomings on the part of the political authorities, defective governance policies, poverty and underdevelopment, identity-based political demands, politicization of ethnicity, shortcomings in reintegrating former combatants, lack of access to agricultural land, economic difficulties and other factors.

The fact that there are also a number of conflicts between States was also highlighted: the causes of these are, essentially, the desire for control of natural resources; the hunger for power; the problems created by refugees; territorial claims, border disputes and the like. Suitable proposals for solutions were made for each case.

2. Under the theme "Mechanisms and methods for the peaceful resolution of conflicts and crises", various methods of peaceful conflict and crisis resolution were examined which could be used in response to the problems facing

Central Africa: mediation, negotiation, good offices, fact-finding missions and judicial settlements.

The approach selected was by a historical analysis of the establishment of conflict prevention, management and resolution mechanisms within an Organization of African Unity (OAU) framework. This approach enabled the Seminar to identify the importance of and the need for international initiatives by States, political figures and international organizations to restore peace in armed conflict situations. It also highlighted the difficulties which peace efforts generally face, primarily intolerance, the lack of a real desire for peace, the thirst for revenge, the refusal to cooperate in good faith and various other impediments.

The discussion of the action taken by OAU and subregional organizations in Africa to find solutions to recent conflicts allowed the Seminar to pinpoint the need for preventive diplomacy based on, among other things, the creation of early-warning mechanisms and the involvement of representatives of civil society (customary chiefs, religious or community leaders, young people and so on) in implementing peace efforts; the need for forcible action to impose peace in some cases, in internal conflicts in particular; and the importance of developing close cooperation between the African regional organizations and the United Nations in matters of conflict prevention, management and resolution.

3. During the examination of the theme "Specific measures to prevent conflicts and insecurity in Central Africa", the speakers, after listing the vectors of conflict in Central Africa, went on to propose measures at the national, subregional and continental levels to contribute to enhanced prevention and management of crises and the maintenance of security.

The fragility of State institutions, the failure of democratic transitions, the exploitation of ethnic differences, the proliferation of paramilitary groups and the uncontrolled circulation of arms were again identified as the chief vectors of conflicts and insecurity in Central Africa. The indirect effects of the measures advocated by the Bretton Woods institutions and the handling by the mass media of African news stories were also cited.

The measures recommended in response to this situation emphasized the concept of sharing, the promotion of a culture of democracy, the inclusion of minorities, the rejection of marginalization, the strengthening of subregional cooperation, the use of mediation, and the reappropriation of democracy and the State through a greater focus on African values.

4. In the course of the examination of the theme "Peacemaking and peacekeeping measures", the participants considered the possibilities and problems of establishing in Central Africa peacemaking and peacekeeping mechanisms that could be utilized in case of conflicts or grave threats to peace.

Emphasis was placed in this respect on the need for confidence-building among the countries of Central Africa, in particular by organizing joint manoeuvres of their armed forces.

The importance of efforts to enhance the compatibility of arms and military equipment with a view to deploying subregional multinational forces in conflict areas was noted.

The discussion of training-related issues allowed the participants to reiterate the need to ensure that foreign assistance in this area took duly into account the concerns expressed by the countries of the subregion based on their specific objectives.

5. The theme "Peace-building measures" was devoted to consideration of the recommendations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the implementation of measures designed to reduce the risk of a resumption of conflict and contribute to creating the conditions most conducive to national reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery in countries emerging from conflict.

The participants emphasized the critical importance of these measures and the need to implement them as soon as conflicts cease. Generally, they include the re-establishment of institutions; the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the ex-combatants; the repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons; the promotion of democracy and good governance; the gradual reduction of the stock of small-calibre arms in circulation and the disarmament of the groups or individuals in possession of such weapons; the building of a culture of peace based on sound democratic practices and principles, tolerance and peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups; and the mobilization of domestic and international resources for economic reconstruction and recovery.

6. Under the theme "Promotion of international humanitarian law", the participants condemned the massive and repeated violations of the rules of international humanitarian law perpetrated in the course of the numerous conflicts that have taken place in Central Africa, mainly affecting the most vulnerable categories of the population (young people, children, civilians, refugees) and the staff of humanitarian organizations.

Emphasis was placed on the need to disseminate more widely the rules of international humanitarian law and to encourage respect for them, whether through the adoption of legislative measures, regulations and practical action to punish violations of international humanitarian law, or through their incorporation in military and civilian training programmes.

7. The recommendations of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the promotion of good governance and sustainable development were examined within the framework of two subthemes.

Under subtheme 1, "Promotion of good governance", the participants sought to define the basic elements of the concept of good governance and examined its importance for the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Central Africa.

They noted the multifaceted nature of the concept, which combines political, ideological, economic, social, cultural and ethical criteria, and identified its main elements, such as transparency in public administration,

accountability, respect for human rights and legality, promotion of democracy and enhanced management of resources.

The discussion of subtheme 2, "Promotion of sustainable development" was an opportunity to emphasize the close link between peace and development.

The participants underlined the need for the countries of Central Africa to step up their efforts to create conditions conducive to economic growth and sustainable human development as a means of preventing conflicts. They also recognized that these efforts, vital though they were, would not be sufficient without the support of the international community, and in particular of international organizations and bilateral donors.

The consideration of each theme led to a wide-ranging and enriching exchange of views between the speakers and the Seminar participants.

The participants noted, as had Mr. Augustin Kontchou Kouomegni, Minister of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cameroon, that several of the decisions adopted within the framework of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa mirrored the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report.

III. Recommendations

At the conclusion of these discussions, the participants unanimously congratulated the Secretary-General of the United Nations, whose report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa constitutes, in their opinion, an excellent analytical reference document on conflicts in Africa.

The participants also expressed satisfaction at the felicitous decision to hold the Seminar, the calibre of the eminent figures and experts who prepared and presented the introductory statements, the broad participation by Central African States, the high rank of their representatives, and the practical arrangements made by the host country and the United Nations in order to ensure the Seminar's success.

While they emphasized the similarity between the ideas contained in the Secretary-General's report and those which had emerged during the discussions, the participants formulated and adopted the following recommendations:

1. Promotion of inclusive democracy

- Promotion of the holding of free and transparent elections in the countries of Central Africa;

- Strengthening of the rule of law and implementation of a democratic policy enabling all social forces and minorities to participate fully in political life;

- Dissemination of a culture of democracy and a culture of peace in Central Africa.

2. Promotion of the peaceful settlement of disputes

- Promotion of a continuous dialogue among the actors in national life, with none excluded, in order to consolidate the peace processes under way and prevent the outbreak of new conflicts;

- Strengthening of the role of civil society, in particular women's and youth organizations, in efforts to prevent and resolve crises and conflicts;

- Appointment of national mediators to defuse crises and prevent disputes from degenerating into armed conflicts, and establishment of a database of African mediators chosen on the basis of their credibility among the population;

- Establishment at the subregional level of information-sharing and educational networks with a view to enabling future leaders, and in particular young people and women, to build close relationships;

- Extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic (MINURCA) until durable peace and security have been established throughout the territory of the Central African Republic.

3. Measures to combat illicit trafficking in and proliferation of light weapons

- Establishment of national commissions to combat the proliferation of light weapons;

- Request to the United Nations Secretary-General to establish an advisory mission on the proliferation of light weapons in the Central African subregion;

- Drafting of a Community charter on investments providing for coercive measures against companies funding armed militias;

- Establishment of a subregional register of conventional arms;

- Revision and harmonization of national laws on the bearing of arms;

- Disarmament and repatriation of the elements of the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo remaining in the territory of the Central African Republic, and provision of logistical support to the armed forces of the Central African Republic to enable them to maintain security effectively along the country's borders.

4. Promotion of cooperation in the fields of defence and security

- Promotion of non-military cooperation among the armed forces and security forces of the subregion;

- Acceleration of the process of preparing and conducting the joint exercises planned to simulate peacekeeping operations, named Biyongho-98;

- Promotion of closer cooperation among Ministries of Defence and other scientific ministries with a view to enhancing regional expertise in map-making;

- Establishment of a joint communication structure with responsibility for providing the international community with comprehensive information on Central African issues.

5. Promotion of international humanitarian law

- Acceleration of the process of establishing in Yaoundé a centre for the promotion of human rights and democracy, in accordance with the decisions taken at previous meetings of the Advisory Committee;

- Systematic inclusion of humanitarian issues on the agenda for the Committee's meetings;

- Systematic dissemination of the rules of humanitarian law, in particular through their incorporation in military and civilian training programmes;

- Establishment, through legislation and regulations, of mechanisms for the repression of violations of international humanitarian law;

- Incorporation in the internal legal order of the countries of Central Africa of the international legal instruments on the protection of children, women and refugees, particularly in time of armed conflict.

6. Promotion of a peacekeeping and peacemaking mechanism

- Development of cooperation among the countries of the subregion in strengthening peacekeeping capacity;

- Need for the speedy establishment of a body with responsibility for conflict prevention, management and resolution in Central Africa;

- Acceleration of the process of amending the basic documents of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in order to allow for the integration in this institution of the Council for Peace and Security in Central Africa (COPAX), in accordance with the decision of the Central African Heads of State and Government meeting in Malabo on 24 June 1999.

7. Promotion of good governance

- Prioritization of the investment of the fruits of economic growth in reforms, measures and projects affecting the largest possible number

of people, in particular the most vulnerable sections of the population;

- Combating of discrimination against women and young people, or on grounds of ethnicity and regional origin, with respect to promotion to senior posts in Government and the public service;

- Prioritization of the involvement of young people and women in good governance programmes, and systematic development of a youth component in all such programmes;

- Establishment of good governance programmes in all Central African countries.

8. Promotion of sustainable development

- Intensification of efforts to promote social development and eradicate poverty in the countries of Central Africa;

- Promotion of social justice and elimination of all forms of discrimination in economic activity;

- Establishment in the countries of Central Africa of an environment conducive to investment and economic growth.

9. Strengthening of subregional integration

- Fresh impetus to economic integration and strengthening of multi-sectoral exchanges between the countries of Central Africa;

- Establishment of a subregional structure with responsibility for facilitating the implementation of the decisions of the ECCAS Heads of State regarding the movement of certain categories of persons and the management and protection of borders;

- Promotion of the integration of Central African nationals in the economic fabric of each country;

- Acceleration of the process of establishing a subregional parliament in Central Africa, in accordance with the decision of the Heads of State and Government of the countries members of ECCAS at the meeting held in Malabo in June 1999.

10. Miscellaneous

- Establishment in each country of a structure with responsibility for follow-up to the recommendations of the Seminar.

The participants expressed satisfaction at the cordial atmosphere that had prevailed throughout their work and thanked the President of the Republic of Cameroon, H.E. Mr. Paul Biya, and the people of Cameroon for the warm welcome and wonderful hospitality extended to them.

DONE at Yaoundé on 21 July 1999.